

REMARKS

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the very thorough consideration given the present application.

Claims 1-14 are now present in this application. Amendments have been made to the drawings. Claims 6-14 have been added. Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

Applicant thanks the Examiner for acknowledging Applicant's claim for priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119, and receipt of the certified priority document.

Drawings

The Applicant appreciates the Examiner's indication that the Drawings filed on December 2, 2003, are accepted.

Claim Amendments

Applicant has amended the claims in order to place the claims in better form. The claim amendments are not being made in response to any statutory requirement for patentability, and have not been narrowed in scope. Instead, the claims have been amended merely to recite the subject matter therein more clearly.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-5 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,761,049 to Nitschmann et al. (Nitschmann), in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,860,300 to Valent. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

While not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claim 1 has been amended to recite a combination of elements in a laundry dryer having a sealing assembly for each door, including a unified sealing member, fixed to the inner end surfaces of the frame cover panel and front support panel, for sealing a gap between the frame cover panel and the front support panel, said unified sealing member contacting the front support panel, while simultaneously contacting surfaces of said door frame and said door glass when the hinged door is closed. Applicant respectfully submits that this combination of elements as set forth in independent claim 1 is not disclosed or made obvious by the prior art of record, including Nitschmann.

In making this rejection, the Examiner admits that Nitschmann does not disclose the Applicant's claimed unified sealing member, and relies on Valent to supply the deficiency.

At the outset, the Applicant respectfully submits that there are fundamental differences between laundry dryers and washing machines (including washer-dryers), which have direct bearing on the use (or lack thereof) of a particular type

of sealing member. In this regard, both Nitschmann and Valent are directed to washing machines which have an inner (perforated) drum and an outer drum (a tub). Every claim of either Nitschmann or Valent is similarly directed.

In other words, the sealing sleeve and the flexible duct of both Nitschmann and Valent have no application for a laundry dryer, since the described sleeve and duct have an additional function of preventing a transmittance of vibration to the frame of the appliance—besides providing a seal against water (rather than air) leakage. This additional function is necessitated by the high speed rotations performed by the perforated drum of a washing machine, resulting in much higher levels of vibration, which is exacerbated by the weight of the water contained in the tub, and felt by the rotating drum.

By contrast, in a laundry dryer, the drum or which inherently rotates at much slower speeds and without the added weight of the water (the bulk of which is removed prior to the drying operation) a direct coupling of the drum to a front support combined to the frame or frame cover causes no undue vibration levels to be transmitted externally. In a washing machine, the front of the drum is supported by substitute means, including heavy dampers (again due to the higher levels of vibration).

Accordingly, Nitschmann teaches no more than does Valent, since the former simply describes a forward edge of the same subject matter as that of the latter, neither being coupled via the support found in a laundry dryer. Moreover, if

the apparatus of either Nitschmann or Valent were to include such a support, a primary function of the apparatus (namely, the vibration absorbing capabilities) would be defeated.

More particularly, Nitschmann teaches a beading 9 (apparently a seal), a frame 3 and a glass 2 (see Fig. 1 of Nitschmann). It appears that two lips of the beading 9 of Nitschmann may contact frame 3 and glass 2, thus providing a seal.

On the other hand, Valent discloses an outer cabinet of a washer/dryer, the outer cabinet having a front panel 1. Valent further discloses a rotatable drum (11) inside of an inner tub 10. Since the rotatable drum 11 is inside of inner tub 10, the Examiner asserts that inner tub 10 is equivalent to a drum support (it appears that the Examiner has attempted to equate the inner tub 10 of Valent with the Applicant's claimed front support panel). In Valent, a bellows 12 (the Examiner's asserted sealing device) provides connectivity between the inner tub 10 and the front panel 1.

The Applicant submits that inner tub 10 of Valent is located deep inside of the washer/dryer of Valent. As such, the inner tub 10 is not near the front of the washer/dryer. Further, the tub 10 is not a panel. The tub 10 also does not support a panel. Therefore, the tub 10 of Valent is not a front panel support. Since the tub 10 is movably suspended from the bellows, the tub 10 is itself in need of support. Further, a front support panel and a frame cover panel (such as front panel 1 of Valent) are separate and distinct structures. The bellows 12 does not

provide a seal between the front panel 1 of Valent and any other structure, which can be equated with a front panel support.

Therefore, the inner tub 10 of Valent (in terms of a support structure) cannot be equated with either the front support or the front support panel of the Applicant's claimed invention (e.g., 53 or 53a in the examples shown in Fig. 3). Therefore, Valent does not disclose a combination of elements including a sealing member contacting a front support panel. As such, Valent cannot supply the deficiency of Nitschmann.

Still further, the Applicant's invention, as recited in claim 1, sets forth that the sealing member is unified. That is, whereas several seals are required to perform a sealing function in the related art, one unified sealing member is required to perform multiple sealing functions in the Applicant's claimed invention.

The Examiner states that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to couple the door and seal of Nitschmann with the drum support of Valent. However, the Examiner has not pointed out the location of such a motivation to couple (combine) in either of the applied references. As such, the Examiner has not established a prima facie case of obviousness.

In this regard, Nitschmann and Valent both disclose individual seals contacting separate and distinct portions of a washer/dryer (howbeit, they do not contact a front support panel). Therefore, if the sealing assemblies of these devices

were combined, they would add nothing more than the Applicant's disclosed related art (an example of which is shown in Fig. 2). In other words, multiple sealing members would still be required to provide multiple seals. Further, the combined features of Nitschmann and Valent would still be deficient in that they would fail to provide a sealing member having a portion contacting a front support panel.

Applicant therefore respectfully submits that the combination of elements as set forth in independent claim 1 is not disclosed or made obvious by the prior art of record, including Nitschmann, for the reasons explained above. Valent cannot supply the deficiencies of Nitschmann. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

With regard to dependent claims 2-5, the Applicant submits that claims 2-5 depend, either directly or indirectly, from independent claim 1, which is allowable for the reasons set forth above, and therefore, claims 2-5 are allowable based on their dependence from claim 1. Reconsideration and allowance thereof are respectfully requested.

New Claims

New claim 6 is allowable as being dependent on claim 1 for the reasons set forth above. New claim 7 is allowable as reciting features similar to those features recited in claim 1. New claims 8-14 depend, either directly or indirectly on claim

7. Accordingly, indication of allowance of new claims 6-14 is respectfully requested.

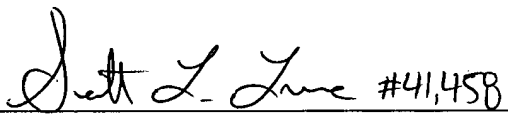
CONCLUSION


Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Percy L. Square (Reg. No. 51,084) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachments

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

The attached sheet of drawing includes changes to Figure 3. This sheet includes Fig. 3 that replaces the original sheet including that same figure.

Figure 3 has been amended to include reference numeral 55 to designate a fixing bar, and to add reference numeral 54 to designate a unified sealing member.

No new matter has been added by the changes. It is respectfully requested that the corrected drawing be approved and made a part of the record of the above-identified application.